



# Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Chairman

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Statement by Chairman Max Baucus Senate Finance Committee Reducing the Delay on Social Security Disability Benefits**

Today about ten million disabled Americans depend on Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to help them make it through each day. Sadly for many, desperately waiting to receive their disability benefits, the answer more times than not seems to be "hurry up and wait".

Today, it takes more than three years for many eligible applicants for Social Security and SSI disability benefits to begin to get their checks. Of this time it takes only seven days for the agency to complete the actual hands-on work. 525 days are lost, however, because of huge backlogs of applications previously initiated. And 621 days are lost due to other delays, of which at least one-third are avoidable. The result is that disabled Americans are left to spend hundreds of days in limbo without critical help. This is unacceptable.

That is why I asked Social Security Commissioner Jo Anne Barnhart to provide a detailed report to help reduce the huge delays responsible for this Social Security waiting game. Today I have been briefed on that report. I have also asked her to recommend the necessary steps we can take to ensure that disabled Americans get the help they need and deserve in a reasonable amount of time, and this follow-up report should be ready soon.

Long delays for disability claimants can cause real hardship for them and their families because a truly disabled person is unable to earn any income during the two or three years it often takes to get their disability benefits approved. Therefore, it is imperative that we do everything we can to improve this process as soon as possible.

I want to commend Ms. Barnhart on her actions so far and I look forward to receiving her recommendations in the near future.